

A SIBERIAN 3-SIDED HOBO NICKEL

BY

STEPHEN P. ALPERT

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Sound bizarre, doesn't it? But that is
what I obtained from an eBay auction
just after our January 2004 OHNS

meeting in Orlando. Besides being a high-quality carving with attractive hand lettering on both sides, and on the edge (that's the seldom-altered third side of a hobo nickel, folks), the piece is just smothered and dripping with history - military history, no less.

First, a description of this totally carved old hobo nickel. The obverse is the standard design alteration - a bearded man wearing a derby. Here we have a nice plain derby, with pointy-ended wrap around brim, no had band, and a smoothly dressed large dome. A nice ear, with internal detail and an earlobe, overlaps the hat brim. The hair-beard-mustache is beautifully engraved. The eye is altered, as are the nose and lips.

There is a simple collar with a jewel at front. The shoulder-coat area below only has the date erased, and the small letters "H.C.A." engraved below. I take this to be the signature initials of the artist. The obverse field is smoothly dressed, with Liberty removed. Around the right is engraved the name "KARASHAW" which I assume is someone's last name, possibly the person depicted on the carving.

The reverse has the buffalo nicely altered into a donkey. All the coins wording has been removed, and the fields nicely dressed for the new hand-engraved legends: "BOLSHEVIKI" around the top, "1919" in front of the donkey, and "10 KOPECKS" where Five Cents used to be.

The eBay seller mentioned something about Siberia on the edge, but didn't post the inscription until after inquired. The edge is neatly lettered "HDQTS. CO. 31 A.E.F. VLADIVOSTOK, SIBERIA" (read upright with the coin reverse facing up). Wow! That's great information. I was afraid this would drive the bidding way up, but apparently it didn't.

I won the eBay auction not knowing if the legends made any sense. I thought it might be a fantasy piece by the carver, someone just fooling around. After receiving the hobo nickel, I began researching the data on the coin on the Internet, and found it to be accurate, as I found much of the history behind this amazing hobo nickel.

It turns out that this piece is from what is referred to as "America's Secret War" when American forces intervened in the Russian Revolution. This was the first and only time American troops operated on Russian soil. Below, briefly, is the story of the U.S. intervention in Siberia, 1918 to 1920, gathered from the Internet (where you can find a whole lot more information on the operation.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Our thanks to Stephen P. Alpert for permission to reprint his article on the Siberian Hobo nickel. It just does not get any neater than this! It would be interesting to check the names of known nickel carvers against the rosters of the units that served in Siberia.

Dave Phillips is back with *Money to Burn*. Maybe some one can help him out on these.

A Fort Davis Post Exchange token highlights the Prices Realized this month, or does it? The sale was ended early with bidding at \$1,350.99. And the Taylor, Drury, Pedlar & Co. tokens from Whitehorse have finally hit the bottom!

We saw 30 or so 25¢ "Bingle Fritz" tokens from Chatanika this month. We made an offer, but it was not accepted. So, another portion of the hoard is floating around.

The tokens of Willis and Welch, both separately and together, from Cleary, Chatanika and Long, used to be very rare. Now, thanks to a hoard, we heard split three ways, and now this additional batch, they are quite common.

Finally, after many problems I have press working (somewhat) so that I can make my 1 oz. gold tokens. See page 54. No, there will not be a two ounce token. This is quite large enough and it is time to do something else (in gold of course).

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PRICES REALIZED

Selected prices realized from eBay:

Anchorage , Masonic Penny, B-28bII	80.00OB
Cordova , Windsor Hotel Bar, B-41b	OB95.00NB
Dalby , Notti, 50¢, B-1b	430.00
Douglas , P.H. Fox, 1 Loaf, B-17a	495.00OB
Douglas , Hunter Hotel, 6¼¢, B-22a	OB250.00NB
Excursion Inlet , A&PSC Co., \$1 w/S B-1e	80.00OB
Ft. Davis , Post Exchange, 5¢, B-1a, but brass	1,350.99*
(Goodnews Bay) , Rutlader, \$5, B-2d	60.00OB
Haines , Heller, 50¢, B-unl., fragment	464.00
Juneau , Heidelberg Bar, 6¼¢, B-28a	125.00OB
Juneau , Lemke, loaf of bread, B-unl.	1,553.58
Juneau , Diamond S, 6¼¢, B-64a	OB75.00NB
Juneau , Tony's Comet, 12½¢, B-69a	35.00OB
(Juneau) , Anita Garmick encased, Senator	OB35.00NB
(Juneau) , Anita Garmick encased, Represent.	OB35.00NB
Kukak Bay , Hemrich, \$5, B-1f	OB177.50
McCarthy , Priesner, 10¢, B-5bII	OB125.00NB
Nome , Board of Trade, 12½¢, B-8g	95.00OB
Nome , Cape Nome Pharmacy, 6¼¢, B-12a	612.00
Nome , Nevada, 12½¢, B-35c	212.57
Northern Commercial Co. , 25¢, unl.	424.00
Palmer , ARRC, 1¢, B-1a	25.72
Palmer , ARRC, 1¢, B-1a	79.00
Palmer , ARRC, 5¢, B-1b	57.65
Palmer , ARRC, 10¢, B-1c	53.00
Palmer , ARRC, 50¢, B-1e	46.00
Palmer , ARRC, \$1, B-1f	56.00
Palmer , ARRC, \$10, B-1h	136.49
Palmer , ARRC, set less \$5, 7pc. B-1	RLOB800.00NB
Palmer , ARRC, set less \$5, 7pc. B-1	RLOB700.00NB
Petersburg , PC&N Pkg., 50¢, B-d	470.00
Seward , Northern, 12½¢, B-8bIII	38.99
Seward , Pioneer Club, 12½¢, B-10aI	OB75.00NB
Talkeetna , BN Pool, 12½¢, B-1aII	35.00OB
Tanana , Timothy's Place, 25¢, B-10a	OB150.00NB
Valdez , C.B. Buffet, 12½¢, B-4b	OB39.99NB
Wrangell , Grant & Lemieux, 10¢, B-4a	350.00OB
Yes Bay , APF, \$1, B-1d	175.00OB
Whitehorse , TDP, 25¢	2.75
Whitehorse , TDP, \$1	2.75
Whitehorse , TDP, \$10	54.99
Whitehorse , TDP, \$20	57.99
AYPE , 1909, 1 DWT	102.50
AYPE , 1909, 1 DWT	228.59
AYPE , 1909, 1 DWT	OB400.00NB
AYPE , encased cent, round	50.49
AYPE , encased cent, round	51.05
Alaska Gold , 2 Too Wah, NGC-62	OB349.00NB

OB = Opening Bid NB = No Bid RL = relist
 RNM = Reserve Not Met R = Reserve W = withdrawn
 BIN = Buy it now DNS = Did Not Sell
 * = auction ended early

SIBERIAN HOBO NICKEL, CONT.

During the Russian Revolution, Japan was about to sent 7,000 soldiers to Vladivostok. In conjunction, President Wilson also sent 5,000 to 7,000 (figures vary) U.S. soldiers, so Japan would not gain a stronghold there. The purpose of deploying U.S. forces there was three-fold: 1) to guard the military supplies that were previously sent there (600,000 tons of war material and about a billion dollars worth of guns and equipment), that was just sitting around inadequately guarded. 2) To secure the eastern end of the Trans Siberian Railway. 3) To stabilize the area during the Russian Revolution.

So an American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F. on the edge of the nickel) was sent to Siberia, comprised mostly of the U.S. Army's 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments (31 INF. is on the edge of the hobo nickel). These regiments were normally based in the Philippines. The British also sent an infantry regiment from Hong Kong, and France one from Indo-China.

arrived in Vladivostok, followed by 1421 troops from the 31st Inf. on August 21. More arrived from the 8th Inf. Div. later. The 31st Inf. operated in the area just north of Vladivostok and in the small mining town of Suchan. There were some casualties in the fighting against the Bolshevik ("Bolsheviki" on the reverse of the hobo nickel). Irkutsk was the westernmost area of operation.

After the collapse of Russia's White Government, the US troops began departing, with the last group leaving in April of 1920 (the 1919 date engraved on the hobo nickel fits right in the middle). The 31st Infantry in Siberia had one officer and 29 enlisted men killed in action, and twice as many wounded. Plus many lost limbs due to frostbite. The men killed and some others are listed on the internet, but I couldn't find a Karashaw or anyone with the initials H.C.A. Further research into the complete roster of the 31st Inf. in Siberia is needed, possibly to identify H.C.A. or Karashaw.

On Aug. 16, 1918, 1590 US troops from the 27th Inf.

continued on page 49

SALOON TOKENS OF THE UNITED STATES

by Al Erickson

- * Lists about 6,400 saloon tokens
- * Also lists Canadian, Mexican and International saloon tokens
- * Gives a Certainty of Attribution (CA) number for each maverick
 - * Has a 55 page Maverick index
 - * Gives a price range for all tokens
 - * Gives historical information on selected tokens
- * Has 650 pages of full size text with a soft cover and "lay-flat" binding.

The cost is \$65 postpaid. The catalog will be available on or about March 15, 2008. Due to a limited production run, receipt of your check guarantees a copy of this long overdue saloon token reference. To reserve your copy, send check or money order to:

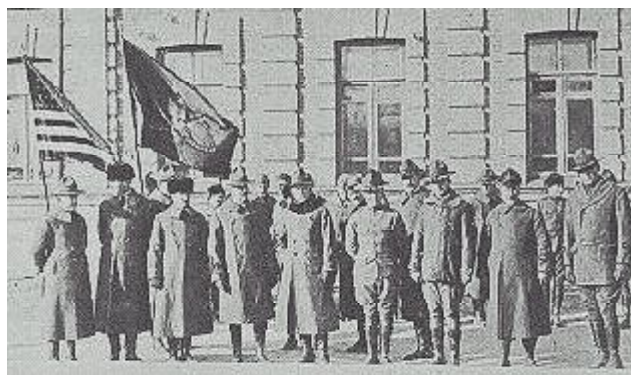
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to #10/08

SIBERIAN HOBO NICKEL, CONT.

Note that the inscribed edge of the hobo nickel begins with "HDQTS. CO." which may indicate that the person who carved this hobo nickel worked in the Headquarters or Headquarters Company of this unit.

On the internet I found many photos of US troops in Siberia, and one of them was actually a group standing in front of the A.E.F. Headquarters building in Vladivostok. The picture is of low quality and hopefully it will reproduce here OK. It is possible that the person who carved the nickel may be in this picture.



Most likely the soldier who carved this coin used a buffalo nickel from his pocket change. This is the best-documented or only U.S. "trench art" soldier-carved

hobo nickel that I know of. It is also the only three-sided hobo nickel known to me. Thus it is probably the most fascinating hobo nickel in my entire collection.

BUTROVICH LETTER

The late State Senator John Butrovich was an avid Alaska token collector. We have a letter that he wrote to another collector we thought you would find interesting.

1-18-66

Dear xxxxx,

Real nice to hear from you and get your list of duplicates. Your Valdez Hotel is one I need. It is Rarity Scale 10. I will trade either a Nom 43 or Nom 44 both of which are rated R even for it. I need Cor. 21, 27, 34. They are rated R 7-8-7 and I don't want to trade R's even on them. I think the Polet Nome are tough also as Kay Dethridge in Juneau doesn't have them nor do any of the local boys. I have Polet fibre in 5¢-10¢-25¢-\$1.00 the 5¢ and \$1.00 are both unlisted and I am sure the publisher of Rubles to State do not have it. Figure out a deal and maybe we can get together. They were in Antonio Polet's estate and when his daughter died the son found them in her effects. They are rare! I am sending a scratch of a mint error an old-timer gave me today. It is a Nordale Hotel mint error. Write me at the Baranof Hotel, Juneau or at Senate Chambers, Juneau Alaska as we are flying to Juneau on Sat morning.

I have two misprints now in Tokens as I have a Nome error also. The Lat2 makes me drool but it is probably a little rich for my blood. If you will put a price on it I'll say "Yes" or "No" and I won't be mad at anybody. Naturally I want every token I see or hear of but I don't



have the where with all to acquire all of them. Yesterday and today I had a field day. Got Juneau 29 and FWA3 not listed. Today a Nordale Hotel error! But that's the way it goes - feast or famine as I'm sure you know.

Note FAI 48. The plug was put in wrong side to. Waiting to hear from your now.

Most Sincerely,
John Butrovich

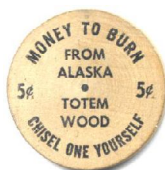
Editor's Note: The rubbing shown is interesting, but I have to disagree with the late Senator. I believe that the copper plug is placed inside the aluminum ring prior to striking. The "good for in trade" die would also have the 25¢ on it.

It is our conclusion that the plug and ring were separated, and then placed back together incorrectly.

Readers will note that the numbering system is from Fernald and McDowell's *Rubles to Statehood*:
Nom 43 = Nome B-41d; Nom 44 = Nome B-41f
Lat 2 = Latouche B-3a Juneau 29 = Juneau B-29a
FWA3 is not described.

MONEY TO BURN

by David Phillips



A group of Alaska wooden tokens that intrigues me, yet is driving me to distraction, are the woods as were put out annually for their conventions by the **Pioneers of Alaska**.

This organization was founded on February 20th, 1907 in Nome and membership required residency in Alaska prior to 1901. More recently, membership requires 30 years of Alaska residency prior to application.

Annual conventions are hosted by local chapters, called Igloos. Many of these hosting Igloos have made available at the conventions a drink wooden token. I have been able to acquire the following:

1978 - Fairbanks	1990 - Kenai Peninsula
1979 - Sitka	(Seward, Homer &
1980 - Juneau	Nikiski)
1982 - Sitka	1997 - Ketchikan
1984 - Fairbanks	1998 - Dawson City
1987 - Palmer	1999 - Nome

Are there any prior to 1978 and from the intervening years? Have they been replaced with metal or plastic tokens?

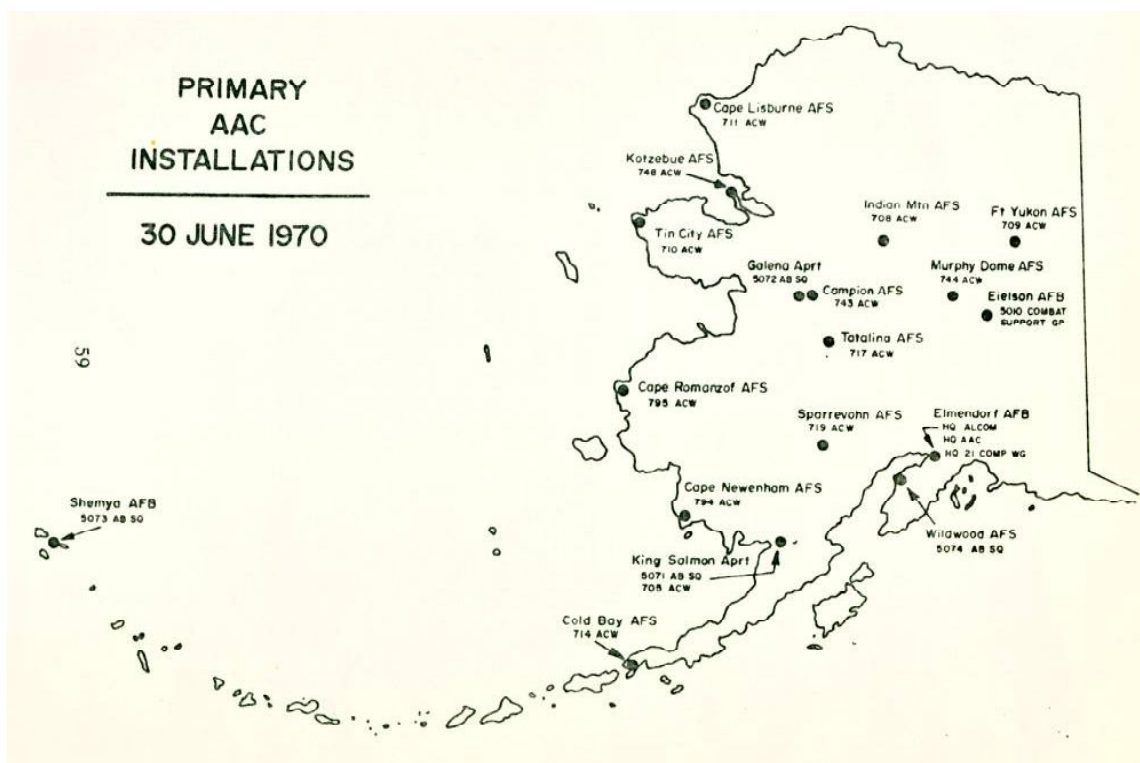
I have written some Igloos and talked to a number of long term Alaska residents, asking:

- Is there a list of where and when Pioneers of Alaska conventions have been held?
- Could somebody tell me anything about the tokens?

I have drawn a blank.

So, if anyone could help me "fill in the blanks," please contact the Editor of the newsletter and he will pass along the information to me.

Ed. Note: Yes, David, there is a Santa Claus.. oops wrong answer. I did find a 1991 for the convention held in Fairbanks. It is on page 52 of 1995. 1978 might have been the first wooden drink token and 1999 might be the last, but I have to believe others were used in the intervening years. I do seem to recall mention of drink "chits" (paper coupons) so perhaps that is what was used. I will pass this request on to a couple local Pioneers and see if they can shed any light.



Have we run this before? It sure looks familiar. While our index is good, it is not great. In any case, this map shows most of the military sites that issued tokens in the 50s and 60s under the Alaska Air Command.

FOR THE RECORD



DOUGLAS: Douglas Inn, good for one drink. Actual size 43mm, black on red plastic (submitted by K. Hawk)



HOMER: The Alibi, \$5. 38mm, gold on purple plastic (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



JUNEAU: Buoy Deck, Rain Check. 40mm, black on brown plastic (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



KENAI: F.O.E. 3525 (Eagles). Good for Well Drink or Beer (yellow), Call Drink (green) and Premium Drink (purple), all 38mm plastic with black printing (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



KETCHIKAN: Yukon Club, Rain Check. You're covered for one, Ketchikan Alaska Rain Bird. A fairly common token. So much so that this is the first time we learned that there were two types! The Rain Bird faces left on the first, and faces left on the second. Both brass, 32mm (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



ALASKA: Native Kayak, Alaska 2008. We have seen many coins with color applied. Some follow the design of the coin (like on state quarters), other just totally obscure the design. This is one of the latter. This is on an Eisenhower Dollar. Really very attractive in shades of blue with browns and tans. This was probably a prize from one of the local "pull-tab parlors," Alaska's legal charitable gambling.



TEXAS: We heard the Texas state quarter was being recalled, and this is the new design. I think it says it all. One of the suggested designs for the Alaska state quarter was Alaska superimposed on a map of the U.S., like on the statehood medal, and then Texas in the middle, similar to the above. The idea was rejected because Texas would boast they were on two quarters.

FOR THE RECORD



FORT DAVIS: Post Exchange, 5¢ in trade. Brass, 25mm. The listed 5¢ is aluminum.



NORTHERN COMMERCIAL CO.: 25¢ in trade, no location given. Aluminum, 29mm (submitted by Kaye Dethridge).



KENNECOTT: Copper Center of Alaska, circa 1910-1920. Copper plaque, thin metal, 63mm by 46mm (submitted by Kaye Dethridge). Struck by Mayer Bros. of Seattle, we have three dies for this type of plaque: Mt. McKinley, Cordova and Juneau. This is the first we have seen from this product line. PR \$50.00OB



ALASKA: Evergreen Mint (a division of Oxford Assaying and Refining), 2002, 35mm, 1 oz. fine gold with polar bear (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



SHEMYA: Noncommissioned Officers' Club; 5¢, 10¢ and 25¢; black on tan, green and red paper, respectively. The 10¢ previously reported with the same serial number, thus from the same booklet. 51mm by 22mm. Price Realized - \$11.84.



(ANCHORAGE): Alaska Magic Fly-in Fishing Trips & Cabins (gold relief). Struck by Alaska Mint using their 2007 sport fishing die. Presumably 1 oz. silver (submitted by Kurtis Hawk).



ALASKA/YUKON: Klondike Gold Rush, Seattle, 1897; Chilkoot Pass, Alaska. Bronze, 38mm. Really a nice medal depicting a steam ship bringing miners to Skagway and a different view of the Chilkoot Pass.

MILITARY CHALLENGE COINS



ALASKA: U.S. Army Alaska, Special Troops Battalion. Commander's and CSM Coin of Excellence. Black, yellow and green on bronze.



ALASKA: Arctic Medic, USA Meddac Alaska. Coin of Excellence. Red, white, blue, yellow green and black on bronze.



ANCHORAGE: U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command. Commander's Coin for Excellence, Service, Teamwork, Integrity, Respect. Black, red, white, light blue and yellow on oxidized silver.



KEFLAVIK: Commander, Fleet Air Keflavik, ASW Capital of the World. White, green, blue, yellow, red and black on oxidized silver.



EIELSON: Red Flag Alaska (training exercise), Eielson Ammo; Beer, Beavers, and Bombs, IYAAYAS! Red, black, yellow and white on bronze.



NAS KEFLAVIK: Ammo on Ice, Providing the enemy the opportunity to die for his country, IYAAYAS USAF. Black, yellow and white on bronze.



U.S.S. ALASKA: (Submarine) silver colored base metal, 45mm by 32mm. Key fob?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Most Challenge Coins are about 38 to 40mm. Some are larger, some smaller. All are shown at about 38mm, but this may not be actual size. Actual size is noted where known. If the enamel is shown "on gold" or "on silver", this should be assumed to be gold colored or silver colored and not the actual metal.

NEW GOLD TOKENS

The new part for my manual hydraulic press has arrived, and I have started to make 1 oz. (or thereabouts) gold tokens.

Each token is pressed 2 to 3 times to bring up the detail, with annealing (heating to soften the gold) between each pressing. The first pressing is inside a collar. Subsequent pressings are not. This is a bit more labor intensive than my smaller tokens which are hand struck, and one blow from a 3# hammer does the job.

You will note “chips” above the G in Gold and the last A in Alaska. These are dents on the die, caused by the dies obeying the law of gravity, and hitting the harder steel on the frame of the press. Now the fact that I was in the process of pressing when this happened is a bit of a concern. Don’t know what happened, but obviously, I did something wrong.

In case your are wondering, that is a mountain with the aurora on the obverse, not a pile of dog turds with fumes rising as my wife suggested.

After pressing, each token is marked with the exact weight over one ounce. We also perform a specific gravity test. From this specific gravity, we estimate the fineness of the token, based on the assumption that the other metal is silver. For a more detailed explanation, see last month’s issue.

We are selling these in our store at 90% of spot price, as they are not pure gold. You may email or call to lock in a price, and we will hold the token for you. If gold is



\$900 when you call, and the token weighs 1.02 oz., your cost is \$826.20 (900 x 1.02 x .9), plus a postage charge of \$5.

Please keep in mind that availability is subject to the gold that we purchase. When you call or email, I will be able to confirm availability, or put you on a waiting list (yeah, like demand is going to require a waiting list).

I have not made any of the \$1000 tokens. I can make these on special order, and price will be \$1000 plus \$5 for shipping (unless gold goes over \$1000). A scan of a lead pressing of the \$1000 die is below, along with a mountain portion of the Mt. McKinley rectangular plaque similar to the Kennecott on page 52. These were pressed without a collar.



ALASKA PROSPECTORS (BASEBALL TEAM) SILVER MEDALS



Originally issued at \$50 and \$30 respectively, we have a few of the 1995 (mintage 50) and 1996 (mintage 30) one ounce silver medals left. \$25 each or \$45 for the pair, plus \$5 for postage and insurance per order.